There’s Change Comin’ Once and For All by BroadwayItBitch

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Summary:

19-year-old Richie Tozier only wants to survive on the streets of New York. When prices of newspapers raises, he does everything in his power to stop it. With the help of reporter Eddie Kaspbrak, will he succeed?

There’s Change Comin’ Once and For All

Author's Note:

> I got the idea of this in July and when I noticed that no one did something like this, I had to do it! I hope you enjoy! Quick thing, I have no idea how to do transitions in stories so if it seems really abrupt, that's why.

In July 1899, it is a cool summer night. Two boys are asleep on a rooftop of the Newsboy Lodging House. One of the boys gets up with the help of a crutch and starts getting dressed.

“Hey, the mornin’ bell ain’t rung yet, Will. Go back to sleep,” The other boy groggily says.

“I wanna beat the other fellas to the street. I didn’t want anyone seein’, ‘cause as ya can tell, I uh, ain’t walkin’ so good,” Will says, putting on his vest.

“Quit gripin’. Any newsie would want what you got, that leg of yours is a goldmine.” Richie comments.

“Richie, can ya help me ou-” Will stops his sentence when he slips down the ladder, but he catches himself.

“Do ya wanna bust your other leg, too?!” Richie says while pulling Will up.

“Uh, no, I wanna go down,” Will adds as soon as he’s back on his feet.

“You’ll be down there soon enough, take a moment. Drink in my penthouse, high above the stinkin’ streets of New York,” Richie looks up to the sky.

“You’re crazy.”

“Oh, why, ‘cause I love a breath of fresh air? ‘Cause I love seein’ the sky and the stars?” Richie sarcastically says.

“You’re seein’ stars, all right,” Will laughs.

“Ugh… them streets down there. They sucked the life right outta my ol’ man. Years of bein’ stomped on by bosses, when they was done, they tossed ‘im to the curb like yesterday’s pape, but they ain’t doin’ that to me!” Richie yells out.

“But everyone wants to come to New York,” Will meekly states.

“New York’s fine for those that got a big, strong door to lock it out. Ya see, Will, there’s a whole other world out there. So you keep your small life in the big city. Gimme a big life… in a small town.” Richie finishes.

Richie had been going at this life since his father died, when he was

17, now he was 19 and he knew every trick.

“Where would you go?” Will asks.

“There’s a little town out west. Brand spankin’ new,” Richie replies, leaning down to grab an old postcard that he had found on one of his first days on the streets.

Hello from Santa Fe!

“You got folks there?”

“Nope. Got no folks nowhere. You?”

“I don’t need folks. I got friends,” Will playfully punches Richie’s arm. Both boys snicker.

“Hey, how’s about ya come with me, huh? No one cares about some gimp leg in Santa Fe! Just hop onto a Palomino, you’ll ride it in style!” Richie gallops like a horse, making Will laugh.

“Oh, yeah, picture me, ridin’ in style,” Will says.

“You know what? I bet with a few months of clean air, you could toss that crutch for good!”

Will started thinking about life away from New York. Thinking about Santa Fe, living with Richie, his best friend. Then his mind wanders to his family. His brother, his mother. He starts to feel concern of how they feel.

“Hey. Hey. We’re family here. Would I ever let you down?” Richie places his hand on Will’s shoulder. “We’ll make it, Will. I know it.”

And with that, they hear the circulation bell as soon as the sun comes up.

“I guess dreamin’s done. Hey, Mike! Lucas, Stanley, Ben! Get a move on, them papes ain’t gonna sell themselves!” Richie yells down to the other newsies as he gets dressed.

As the other newsies get ready for another day, another boy with a cigar in his mouth is buttoning up his shirt.

“Hey, Mike, Ben, Dustin, you heard Richie. Get a move on!” Stan had repeated what Richie said.

“I was having the most beautiful dream. My lips are still tinglin’!” Lucas exclaimed.

“Oh, a pretty girl?” Stan asked.

“A leg of lamb,” Lucas replied. He takes Stanley’s cigar.

“Hey, that’s mine!”

“You’ll steal another,” Lucas bit back at Stan.

“Hey, we got work to do!” Mike yelled out.

“We’ve got a long day ahead of us, people!” Richie walks down the stairs.

“Hey, Rich, I think I need a new sellin’ spot, got any ideas?” Ben had asked Richie.

“Try Bottle Alley or the Harbor,” Dustin replied.

“Or Central Park,” Mike added.

“Try any banker, bum or barber,” Lucas had also commented.

“Newsies, let’s move out!” Richie said, having them run out of the building.

“Hey, Will, what’s the forecast today? Rain or shine?” Mike asked Will as soon as they were outside.

“Hmm… no rain. Huh! Partly cloudy, clear by evening!” Will exclaimed.

“They oughta bottle this guy!” Mike replied with a stifled laugh.

“And the limp sells 50 papes a week all by itself!” Stan said to Lucas.

“I don’t need the limp to sell papes, I got personality,” Will defends. “I can get all the ladies with this face! I betcha by the end of the week, I can get you all a Christmas meal!”

As the newsies walk down the street, they go to the local church so they can have breakfast (which was actually just cold coffee) for the day. As the nuns hand out the coffee, Dustin speaks up.

“Thanks for the grub, Sister!”

“Dustin, when are we going to see you inside the church?” One of the nuns asked.

“I dunno, Sister, it’s bound to rain sooner or later!”

Richie looks over to the sidewalk and sees a young boy walking. The boy had slightly tanned skin and had freckles splattered across his face. His dark hair was blowing in the wind.

“Hello, sir, may I interest ya the latest news?” Richie asked sweetly.

“The paper isn’t out yet,” The boy replied coldly.

“Oh, it would be my pleasure to deliver it to ya personally.”

“You know what? I've got a headline for you, ‘Cheeky Boy Gets Nothing For His Troubles’.” The boy said, walking away.

“I’m wounded!” Richie exclaimed, getting the attention of the other newsies.

“I wonder what the headline will be,” Will said.

“An earthquake?” said Lucas.

“A war?” Mike added.

“A crooked politician!” Dustin yelled.

“That ain’t news! That’s basically everyday!” Richie yelled back.

The newsies run to their place of work, the New York World. It has been run by the Pulitzers for years, and the newsies were treated badly like at the Sun and the Journal. The boys crowd around the gate.

“Look! They’re putting up the headline!” Stan yelled.

“I hope it’s real bloody like a nice, clear picture!” Mike yelled back.

“Yeah!” The others exclaimed.

A man writes on a chalkboard with chalk, writing down the headline.

Trolley Strike Enters 3rd Week

“The trolley strike? Not again!” Dustin says.

“Man, 3 weeks of the same story,” Stan groans.

“Hey, make way!” Ben yells when 2 older boys come around to unlock the gate.

“Oh, dear me, what’s that unpleasant smell? I’m afraid the sewers mighta backed up durin’ the night. Or could it be the Bowery Boys?” Richie says jokingly, the older boys opening the gate, and the newsies enter Newsie Square.

“Hey, Patrick, word on the street is that you and Henry took money to take down strikin’ trolley workers,” Stanley states.

“So? It's honest work,” Patrick fired back.

“Cracking the heads of defenseless workers?” Lucas asked.

“I take care of the guy that takes care of me.” Patrick says with annoyance in his voice.

“Ain't your father one of the strikers, Patrick?” Mike asks.

“Guess he didn't take care of me!” Patrick pushes Mike back.

“You want some of that, too? Ya lousy crip!” Henry yells at Will, taking his crutch and pushing him down.

“Hey, that's not nice, Henry.” Richie says, taking Will’s crutch from Henry.

“All right, five to one Richie skunks him!” Dustin yells.

“Yeah!” the others exclaim again.

“One unfortunate day, you're gonna find out that you've got a bum gam of ya own. How would ya feel about us picking on you?” Richie says with a bit of seriousness. “Hey! How’s about we find out?!”

Richie hits Henry and Patrick on their shins, making then groan in pain and writhing on the ground.

“Oh, wait till I get my hands on you!” Henry rages.

“You betta catch me first!” Richie hands Will his crutch back.

“Papes for the newsies! Line up!” A man with a deep voice yells out. The newsies line up to pay for their newspapers to sell. Patrick and Henry limp to their posts.

“Mornin’, Rogan! Miss me?” Richie jokes. “I’ll take the regular.” He sets two quarters on the counter.

“Hundred papers for the wise guy,” Tom Rogan says to Patrick. Patrick hands Richie the newspapers.

“How’s ya day goin’, Tommy?” Stan asks, lighting his cigar.

“Ya not gettin’ fifty papes for free, Stanley,” Rogan says with a grimace.

“Dammit.” Stan mumbles, setting a quarter down and taking his papers.

“Good morning, Mr. Rogan,” Will says nicely.

“Ah, fifty papes for Will,” Patrick hands Will the newspapers. “Hey, look at this, a new kid!”

Behind Will was a teenage boy, looking distinguished for the first day.

“I’m new, too!” says a little boy next to the older kid.

“Don't worry, kid, rubs right off,” Stanley says with a laugh.

“T-twenty newsp-p-papers, please.” The older boy says.

“Twenty for the new kid. Let's see the dime,” Rogan orders.

“I’ll p-pay when I s-sell them,” The boy says confused.

“C’mon, cash up front,” Rogan was getting annoyed now by the minute, at one point he was going to burst.

“But wh-whate-ever I d-don't sell, y-you buy back, r-r-right?” the boy stuttered.

“Certainly! And everytime you lose a tooth, I put a penny under ya pillow,” Rogan says sarcastically. “Drop the cash or move along.”

The boy puts a dime on the counter and takes the twenty newspapers from Patrick.

“Lucas, lemme see the money.”

“You have an interesting face, Rogan. Ever thought about getting into movin’ pictures?” Lucas asks.

“Really think I could?”

“Yeah! Buy a ticket, they let everyone in!” All the newsies laugh.

“E-e-excuse me. I a-a-asked for t-twenty, but I got nineteen,” Stutter boy says to Rogan.

“And how nice I was to the kid!” Rogan yells.

“I-I just w-want what I p-payed for.” Richie takes the boy’s set of newspapers and starts counting them.

“Beat it!” Henry yells at the boy.

“Hey! The new kid’s right, Rogan, there's nineteen here. I’m sure it was a mistake ‘cause Patrick here can't count to twenty with his shoes on.” This gains a laugh from the newsies. Henry gives the kid another newspaper and Richie hands back the ones he took. “Give the new kid another fifty, on me.”

“N-no, I don't want anymore papers.” the new kid objects.

“What kinda newsie am I talkin’ to here?” Richie says with disbelief.

“I’m not a charity c-case. I d-d-don't even know you.”

“His name is Richie!” the little kid says. Richie was surprised that someone that young knew about him, let alone his name.

“Yeah, this here's the famous Richie Tozier. He escaped jail on the back of Teddy Roosevelt's carriage and made all the papes.” Will explains.

“Hey, kid, how old are ya?” Richie asks the little boy.

“I’m 12,” the kid says, “… almost.”

“Well, if anyone asks, you’re 9. Younger sells more,” Richie advises. “Now if we wanna be partners-”

“Wh-who said w-we want a partner?” The stutter boy interrupts.

“Sellin’ with Richie is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Learn from him, ya learn from the best.” Will says.

“I-i-if he’s th-the best, why d-does he want with me?” He asks Will.

“It's ‘cause you got a little brother and I don't. With this, we could sell a thousand papes a week. Hey, lemme see ya pout.” Richie says to the kid and the kid pouts his lip. “Ah, we’re gonna make millions!”

“I’m Georgie, this is my brother Bill.”

“It's nice to meet ya both, how about we split everything 70-30?” Richie offers.

“50-50. You wouldn't try a fast one on a kid?”

All the newsies stop in their tracks, staring at Georgie.

“60-40. And that's my final offer.”

Georgie looks at Bill. Bill nods in agreement of what they were silently asking.

“Deal!” Georgie says. Richie spits in his hand and Georgie does the same and they shake hands.

“That's disgusting,” Bill says.

“That's just business here. Newsies, hit the streets! The sun is up, the headline sucks and this kid ain't gettin’ any younger!”

All the newsies leave Newsie Square and they start another day on the job, hoping to get enough money for dinner that night.

At the top floor of the building, Miss Sonia Pulitzer is working on documents for the day. She sits back in her chair, frustrated.

“Gentlemen, The World is in trouble. Our circulation is down for the third quarter in a row,” Sonia sighs.

She didn't think that taking up her father's newspaper was going to be this hard. But she had insisted that she keep it going. What was she thinking?

“Miss Pulitzer, every paper's circulation is down since the war ended.” Neil Hargrove said to Sonia.

“Whoever said ‘war is hell’ wasn't trying to make newspapers.”

“We could use an exciting headline,” Neil said.

“What is it today?” Sonia sets her pen down.

“The trolley strike.” All of the enthusiasm was gone from Neil, afraid of what Sonia would say.

“That's not exciting enough? It's ep-”

“It's boring,” Scott Clarke interrupted, “Folks wanna know ‘is the trolley coming or am I walking’. No one cares why.”

“The strike is about to be settled. Governor Roosevelt just put his support behind the workers,” Neil explained.

Sonia gave a disgusted noise, “That man is a socialist.”

“Teddy Roosevelt's no socialist. He’s an American hero,” Neil gave a chuckle.

“He wants to outlaw football for being too violent. We can work things out with it!” She screams. “You're right, Hargrove. He’s not a socialist. He’s a commie.”

“You never liked Roosevelt, Sonia. You wrote article after article when he ran for governor.” Scott had said, “and now he’s elected.”

“How can I influence the voters if I don't give them my opinion?”

“How are we supposed to sell more papers without exciting headlines and big pictures?” Scott asks.

Sonia gives another sigh, “The answer is right in front of you!” She exclaims. “Just a slight adjustment.”

“How does that make us sell more papers?” Neil was confused now. He always was when Sonia was talking.

“We don't sell the papers, newsies sell papers,” Scott vaguely answered.

“Exactly. Thank you, Mr. Clarke.” Sonia says as she grabs the bottle of whiskey. “We currently charge the newsies fifty cents per hundred. But! If we raise the price to sixty per hundred…” she trails off.

“A mere tenth of a penny per paper?” Neil says.

“It's genius.” Sonia smirks.

“But it's going to be awfully rough on the children,” Scott says with concern.

“Please. I’m giving them a lesson on economics.” Sonia pours the whiskey into some glasses. “The new price is in effect in the morning.”

She downs her whiskey in one swig. ‘I’ll make you proud, Father. Just you wait.’ she thinks to herself.

Later that evening, Bill is still selling his papers, and is not doing great.

“P-p-paper! E-evenin’ pape here!” He tries getting the attention from some people. He hears Richie quietly laughing. “What?”

“I’ve never seen anything like that in years. Here, lemme help ya,” Richie takes Bill’s newspaper, “Extra, extra! ‘Terrified flight from burnin’ inferno’!” a man walks up and takes the paper, giving Richie a dime. “Bada bing, bada boom.” Richie gives Bill the dime.

“You j-just lied t-t-to that man. My f-father always told us n-n-not to lie.”

“My father told me not to starve,” Richie says with a laugh. Georgie comes running to them.

“Hey, I sold my last paper!” Georgie yells.

“I-I still h-have one more.”

“Gimme that!” He practically rips it out of Bill’s hand and runs up to a woman walking down the street, “Buy a paper from a poor orphan boy?” He coughs.

“Oh! You poor thing! Of course I’ll take a newspaper! Here’s a dime,” The woman gives Georgie the dime and walks away.

“Good job, squirt!” Richie praises, tousling Georgie’s hair.

“This is way better than school!” Georgie exclaims.

“Don't e-even think that! When Dad gets b-back t-t-to work, w-we go back to school.” Bill takes the money that Georgie earned and starts counting it.

“How’s about we divvy up the dough? Find ya some grub, find ya a place to spend the night-”

“Nah, w-we gotta get h-h-home, we’ll be late for d-dinner with our folks,” Bill interrupts

Richie’s heart sank. Bill and Georgie had a place to call home. A place where warm meals would be made with love. A mother, a father, siblings. He wished he could have that again. The other newsies were great, but to Richie, it wasn't the same.

“Ya got folks, huh?” Richie murmurs.

“Doesn’t everyone?” Georgie asked. Even if he was only 12, he was still naive.

Richie didn't respond.

“Our d-dad got h-hurt on the job. He w-w-was let go a couple w-w-

weeks ago, so we came to f-find work," Bill explained softly, feeling sorrow for Richie. "If you want, we c-can set an e-extra p-p-p-place for dinner."

"No, no, I couldn't."

"Our ma's a great cook!" Georgie commented.

"I appreciate it, but I can't. I… got a thing tonight. With the fellas," Richie boldfaced lied to them. He wanted to accept, but he also didn't want to be another mouth to feed.

"Is that the guy you're meeting?" Georgie asks and points to a man walking down the street.

"Tozier!" the man bellowed.

"Run for it!" Richie yelled at the brothers.

"Tozier!" The man yelled again.

They run down an alleyway, with the man chasing after them. They go down a stairwell leading to the backstage of a basement theater.

"I think… I think we lost 'im," Richie said, trying to catch his breath.

“Who w-was that?!” Bill yelled.

“That was Robert Gray. We call him Pennywise ‘cause he ain’t wise with his pennies. He runs a place called the Refuge. It’s for kids who are ‘delinquents’. Make sure you avoid him when you’re on the job,” Richie explains.

“Hey, you up there, shoo! No children allowed in the theater!” A woman yells up to them.

The woman had red fiery hair that was tucked into a bun, which was decorated with hairpieces with gems in it. She was wearing a hot pink dress with little diamonds encrusted in the fabric. The woman had bright blue eyes and freckles across her face.

“Not even me, Miss Beverly?” Richie jokes.

“Oh, Richie Tozier! Get down here and give me a hug!” Beverly exclaims. Richie runs down and gives her a big hug. “Where ya been, kid?”

“I’ve been around. Makin’ ends meet.” Richie laughs, “Billy, Georgie, this is Beverly Marsh. The greatest star of Manhattan. She also owns the joint.”

“Oh, I own the mortgage. It's a pleasure, gents.” Beverly gives them a

warm smile. Richie always thought of Bev as a maternal figure, even if they're the same age.

“N-nice to meet you,” Bill bows to her

“Say, Bev, we got a problem, ya mind if we hide down here awhile?” Richie asks.

“Where a better place to escape trouble than the theater? Is Pennywise after you again?” Bev’s smile disappears, giving a look of concern to Richie.

“Hey, Rich, did you really escape jail on the back of Teddy Roosevelt's carriage?” Georgie asked.

“Why w-would the governor b-b-be at a j-juvenile jail?” Bill said to Georgie.

“It happens that he was runnin’ for office and he wanted to show that he cared for orphans.” Richie says, “so while he was getting his mug in a pape, I got my ass in the backseat and off we rode into the sunset.”

“You really know the governor?!” Georgie squealed.

“He don't… but I do,” Bev said in a sing songy voice. “Richie, when you get a chance, I’d love for you to paint me another one of these

murals! This last one was a doozy, folks love it!”

She motions to the backdrop of a forest, on the corner says ‘RT’, signed by Richie.

“You m-made this?” Bill says.

“Your friend here is an artist. And since things have been going well, I can actually pay,” Bev says.

“I couldn't take your money, Bevvie.”

“Miss Marsh! You're on!” a stagehand yells out.

“I’ll be back soon. Enjoy the show boys and don't you worry about Pennywise. You’re with Bevvie now.” Bev sweetly says.

Bev goes onstage and she takes a deep breath.

“Please welcome the star of our show, Miss Beverly Marsh!” the stagehand introduces Bev.

The curtain rises as the orchestra plays a song. Bev’s voice fills the room as she sings.

I'm doing alright for myself, folks.

I'm healthy, I'm wealthy,

I'm wise.

My investments and such

Have all gone up so much-

Seems whatever I touch

Starts to rise.

I've got men, I've got money

And yet

The thing I want most

I can't get.

As Bev continues singing, Richie sees that up in the balcony is the boy he met that morning. The boy seemed to be enjoying himself, and also writing something down in a notepad. Richie looks away when Bev finishes her song.

"Please welcome the Bowery Beauties!" Bev exclaims and the audience applauds.

"Hey, Bev, can I get a seat up in the balcony?" Richie asks Bev.

"Which one, sug?" Bev asks back and Richie points to the boy's

balcony. “Ah, I see. Go on up.”

“Thank you, Miss Beverly.”

He takes Bev’s hand and kisses the top of it. Richie goes to the staircase that leads to the balcony and climbs up the stairs. When he makes it up, he admires the boy from behind. He takes in the shape of his hair and his small stature. The boy was so handsome, Richie couldn’t believe it.

“Well, hello again,” Richie speaks up, startling the boy.

“What the hell are you doing in here? This is a private box,” the boy says annoyed.

“Shoula locked the door,” Richie chuckles and sighs, “Twice in one day. Think it’s fate?”

“Please go away, I’m working and I can’t afford to get distracted.”

“A workin’ boy? Doin’ what?” Richie is genuinely curious, but he just wants to get to know the boy better.

“Reviewing the show for the New York Sun,” The boy gives Richie a forced smile, hoping to send him away.

“How ‘bout that, I work for the World!”

“Aw, and out there, someone cares,” The boy bites. “Please, I beg of you to leave me alone, I’m not in the mood to talk to strangers.”

“You’re gonna make a lousy reporter then,” Richie comments, annoying the boy more. “The name’s Richie Tozier.”

“Is that what it say on your rap sheet?” The boy laughs at his own comeback. Richie laughs as well.

“A smart boy. I admire smart boys. Beautiful, smart, independant-”

“Do you mind?!” The boy had had it. He stands up to yell at Richie once more, but is stopped by other theater-goers.

“You got in for free, at least pay attention,” Beverly said down below.

“Sorry, Bevvie,” Richie whispered to her. The boy goes back to watching the show.

Richie takes out a piece of newspaper and a pencil and starts sketching out the boy’s face. He gets the shadowing on the corners of the face. The boy turns his head towards Richie.

“What are you doing?” The boy asked.

“Hey, quiet down, people are watchin’ the show,” Richie responds.

“You know, you are the most impossible boy-” A person in the audience shushes them, “ever,” the boy whispers.

Richie takes this as a sign to leave, and he finishes off the portrait. He leaves the drawing on the chair and leaves. Once Richie is gone, the boy looks next to him and finds the portrait of him.

The next morning, the newsies are gathered around Newsie Square waiting for the headline to come up.

“Dem fire sirens kept me awake all night,” Stanley said, rubbing his eyes. Lucas speaks up.

“The sirens is like lullabies to me. The louder the siren, the better the headline. The better the siren, the better I eat. And the better I eat-”

“The further away from you I sleep.” Stan finishes, lighting his cigar. Bill and Georgie come running to the Square.

“Morning, fellas. S-sorry we’re l-l-late, we had to h-help ou-our mom with something,” Bill says, panting.

“Oh, they gotta mother? I was gonna get me one,” Stan says.

“Where’s the one you had?” Dustin asks.

“He traded her for a box of cigars!” Mike laughs.

“They was Coronas!” Stan yells at Mike.

“We have a father, too!” Georgie says.

“A mother AND a father, I’ve heard it all,” Mike says back.

“They takin’ a long time with the headline,” Lucas sighs.

“Here it comes now!” Georgie says.

New Newsie Price: Sixty Cents Per Hundred

All the newsies exclaim with disbelief.

“What the hell?” Dustin says.

“Ah, man, I’m gonna end up on the street!” Will yells.

“You’re already on the street, Will,” replies Lucas.

“... in a worse neighborhood.”

Lucas rolls his eyes and Richie comes to Newsie Square.

“Whaddya waitin’ for?” Richie asked.

“Get a load of this, Richie!” Will says, showing the headline to Richie.

“Like Pulitzer don’t make enough already,” Mike says.

“Nah, this has gotta be a gag.” Richie couldn’t believe it. Yesterday, it was the usual fifty cents.

“Papes for the newsies! Line up!” Rogan bellows his everyday line. He has a devious smirk on his face.

“Nice joke, Rogan. I’ll take a hundred,” Richie sets fifty cents on the counter.

“Hundred will cost ya sixty,” Rogan says.

“I ain’t payin’ no sixty,” Richie protests.

“Then make way for someone who will.”

“Fellas, we don’t need to take this! Let’s take our business over to the Journal!” Richie yells out.

“Yeah!” The newsies yell. Ben runs up.

“No, I’ll save ya the walk. They upped their price, too,” Ben informs them.

“Then we’ll go to the Sun.” Richie says.

“New day, new price. It’s the same around town,” Rogan says.

“Why the jack-up?” Richie asks.

“Better ask further up the food chain. Ya buyin’ or movin’ on?”

“Fellas, gather ‘round,” Richie says and the newsies huddle together.

“They can’t just do that, can they?” Mike asks.

“It’s their paper,” Stan adds.

“Ain’t we got no rights?” Dustin irritatedly asks.

“We got the right to starve. C’mon, let’s just get our papes and head out,” Will says.

“No one’s payin’ somethin’ like that,” Richie says to Will.

“Well, what’re we ‘sposed to do?” Ben asks.

“Stop crowdin’ him! Let the man work it out!” Georgie yells, pushing the others back. “... hey, Richie, ya still thinkin’?”

“Yeah, can’t ya smell smoke?” Stan laughs.

“Okay, here’s the deal. If we don’t sell papes, then no one sells papes.

No one sells papes until the original price is back," Richie explains.

"Y-y-you mean a s-s-strike?" Bill stutters.

"You heard Billy, we goin' on strike," Richie says.

"N-n-no, that's n-not w-what I-"

"We shut this place down like the trolley workers!" Richie exclaims.

"But the cops will bust our asses like they did with the trolley workers," Mike worryingly says.

"They ain't gonna care 'bout a buncha kids! Right, Bill?"

"L-leave me outta this. I-I-I'm just t-trying to feed m-my fam-family," Bill says.

"You don't think the rest of us is tryin' to do that, too?"

"That don't m-matter. You c-can't s-s-strike, you're n-not a u-union." Bill says.

“What if I says we is?” Richie says.

“There’s a l-l-lotta th-things you need i-in order to b-be a union. Like… like m-m-membership.”

“Whaddya call these guys?” Richie gestures to the other newsies.

“A-and officers.”

“I nominate Richie as President!” Will exclaims and the newsies cheer.

“How about a s-statement of p-p-pur-purpose?” Bill asked, hoping to stump them.

“Oh, I must’a left that in my other pants.” Bill should’ve had them now.

“What’s a statement of purpose?” Dustin asked.

“A r-reason for for-forming th-the union,” Bill replied. ‘Dammit,’ he thought.

“What reason did the trolley workers have?” Richie asked Bill.

“I-I-I dunno. W-wages, w-w-work hours? S-safety on the jo-job?” Bill guesses.

“Who don’t need that?” Richie says. “Hey, I bet if ya father had a union, you wouldn’t be out here tryin’ to make ends meet.” Bill gives Richie a quiet ‘yeah’. “So the union is hereby formed by havin’ each other’s backs. ‘Union’d we stand’! Hey, that ain’t bad, someone write that down!”

“I got a pencil!” Georgie says, holding out a pencil to Richie.

“Well, meet our Secretary of State! Now what, Bill?”

“If you wanna s-strike, you ne-need a v-v-vote.”

“So let’s vote. It’s ya choice, boys. Do we let Pulitzer pick our pockets, or do we strike?” Richie asks.

“Strike!” The newsies yell.

“Wouldn’t the strike be more effective if someone in charge knows about the strike?” Will asks.

“Lemme be the one who tells Rogan!” Stan excitedly says.

“Who tells, Pulitzer?” Richie asks Bill.

“I-I don’t know… I guess…” Bill had to give in. He was really the only one who knew about strikes in the whole group, “Y-you d-do, Mr. President!”

“What do we tell ‘em?” Richie asks.

“We t-tell th-them that w-we deserve the re-respect we need as employ-employees.”

“Sonia’s gotta know that we’re kids like any other kid in New York!” Richie gains a chorus of cheers again.

“W-we got a union!” Bill yells. “We’re in this together!”

“Yeah!”

The newsies run in ad Richie takes the chalk and writes on the chalkboard.

Strike!!!

The newsies cheer. They run up to the top floor to Sonia's office. Bill, Georgie and Richie walk in together, chins high and chests puffed out. As the others wait, all three kids are kicked out by a guard.

"You tell Pulitzer that a few days into this strike, she's gonna be beggin' to see me! You got that?!" Georgie screams as the door closes, "He got it!"

In a bar, the boys are cheering about what they're doing. Richie had enough of people degrading him or his friends, and he wants to put Sonia Pulitzer in her place.

"I s-s-say that w-we started our strike in a m-most aus-auspicious man-ma-manner," Bill raises his glasses and gets a few confused murmurs from the newsies.

"Uh… I dunno 'bout that," Ben speaks up. "But, did you see Rogan's face?!" Ben laughs.

"Okay, now we's gotta spread the word," Richie suggests.

"I'll take Harlem!" Lucas says.

"I got midtown!" Stan follows.

“I got the Bronx!” Ben adds.

“Okay, uh, Mike, you got Queens. Dustin, you got Eastside. And who wants Brooklyn?” The newsies look away from Richie when he said that.

The Brooklyn newsies had a reputation. The group was led by Max Mayfield, and a lot of other newsies were afraid of her. But Richie? No way.

“C’mon, Brooklyn! Max Mayfield’s turf! Mike, you afraid of Brooklyn?” Richie asks.

“I ain’t afraid of no turf,” Mike defends, “... but that Max Mayfield gets me a little jittery.”

“Oh, my God,” Richie rubs his temples, annoyed, “Me and Billy got Brooklyn.”

“I-I-I’m not su-sure…” Bill had heard of Brooklyn from his father, heard that everyone is a criminal there. Of course he had a right to be scared.

“Why is everyone so afraid of Brooklyn?”

Richie knew that voice anywhere. He looks behind him and sees the boy he saw at Bev's theater the night before.

"What're you doin' here?" Richie asked with a smile.

"Asking a question, and I'd like an answer."

"Look, if you get Brooklyn on ya side, you've hit paydirt." Richie pauses, "Ya know, for someone who works for the New York Sun, you've been spendin' your time around at the World. You… followin' me?"

"What I wanna know is you think that you can take on the most richest woman, the daughter of Joseph Pulitzer, in all of New York?" The boy tests.

"Don't you do entertainment?" Richie chuckles.

"This is entertaining."

"What's the last news story you wrote?"

"What's the last strike you organized?" The boy says back to Richie, basically answering his own question.

“I say we leave the exclusive for a real reporter.” Richie says, frustrating the short boy.

“Do you ever see anyone giving you the time of day?” The boy practically screams. He takes a deep breath, “Look, I’m just busting out of the social pages. But if you give me the exclusive, if you let me run with the story, and I’ll give you the space.”

The boy was desperate now. He absolutely needed the story. He was nearing the age of 18 and wanted to be recognized right away, so this was his chance.

“You want a story? Come to Newsie Square tomorrow mornin’ and you’ll get one,” Richie couldn’t say no to that face. “And bring a camera, you’re gonna wanna snap a picture of dis.”

The dinner bell rings, signifying that the newsies need to leave. As the newsies disperse, Richie lags behind with the boy.

“So, why’re you on the streets? You selling newspapers to pay your way through art school?” The boy asked.

“Art school?” Richie says confused. The boy takes out the newspaper portrait Richie drew.

“You have talent. You should be an illustrator for someone, not out here.”

“Nah, that’s not a life for me,” Richie shakes his head.

“Then what do you want?” The boy asks.

“What I’m lookin’ at,” Richie flirts.

“Okay…”

“You got a name?”

“Eddie. Eddie… Kaspbrak.” Eddie hesitates.

“Why the pause? Ya not sure?” Richie asks.

“It’s my byline. The name I publish under,” Richie nods in understanding. “What’re you hoping for tomorrow?”

“Today, we didn’t sell papes. Tomorrow, we stop the wagons that deliver them,” Eddie writes down Richie’s answer.

“Yes. This is good. Thank you, Mr. Tozier,” Eddie starts to walk away, but Richie places a hand on Eddie’s shoulder, stopping him.

“Hey, Eds. Write it good. We’s countin’ on ya.”

Eddie nods his head and watches Richie walk off into the distance.

‘You heard the man.’ Eddie thinks, walking in the other direction.

The next morning, at Newsie Square, Richie and the other newsies are waiting for the other supporters to assemble.

“I-is any-anyone else c-c-coming?” Bill asks.

“No damn clue,” Richie replies. He didn’t sleep all night last night. Richie was anticipating the article Eddie would write, as well as how today would go down.

“You see Max Mayfield?” Stanley asks.

“Yeah, we seen her,” Richie says. He, Bill and Georgie went to Brooklyn after dinner and met with Max.

“She was pretty impressed, don’tcha think, Billy?” Richie asked to

Bill.

“I’d s-say s-s-s-so,” Bill stutters.

“So they’re with us?” Stan asks anxiously.

“I didn’t say that. She said that she’d think on it. If ya see any newsie from Brooklyn, I’ll be surprised,” Richie replies. “Lucas, what’d Harlem say?”

“They wanna know what Brooklyn is gonna do,” Lucas replies, hesitation in his voice.

“Mike, what about Queens?”

“Queens will be backin’ us up-”

“See, Bill, it ain’t all bad!” Richie cuts Mike off.

“As soon as they get the nod from Brooklyn,” Mike finishes. Richie feels a headache coming on, and pinches his nose.

“I got the same in midtown,” Stan comments. Henry and Patrick pass by.

“Hey, Patrick, I was hearin’ about a strike happenin’ today. I’m not complainin’. My skull bustin’ arm could use a rest today,” Henry laughs as they walk away.

“Are we doin’ the right thing?” Georgie asks.

“Of c-course we a-are, Georgie,” Bill stands behind his little brother.

“What if we hold off on this for a few days?” Stan suggests.

“No, no, we can’t quit now before we even started,” Richie says.

“How’s about we don’t show up for work?” Dustin asks.

“No, they’ll just replace us!” Richie was at the end of his rope. He didn’t know what to do. “Bill, help me out.”

“Listen, w-we’ve been going a-at th-this for y-years. Do you th-think k-ki-kids wanna do this? Most kids w-would r-rather be playing ou-out-outside or g-going t-to school. Instead, most of us a-are tr-trying to p-pr-provide for ou-our families,” Bill isn’t one for inspiring speeches. He’s basically doing improv right now. “We n-n-need to f-fight for e-ev-every kid in every s-sweatshop, fac-factory and s-s-slaughterhouse in the city.”

The boys knew that. They've all been trying to survive since either their early teens, mid teens or maybe they've just started. But it wasn't just about them. There were kids on the streets that had to feed their families or just themselves.

"S-so, we can-cannot back d-down."

"You trespassin' or are ya workin'?" Patrick asks, noticing the commotion.

"We ain't workin'," Richie smugly says, getting a few grimaces from Rogan, Henry and Patrick. "Newsies! Get 'em!"

It becomes a full on riot. Newsies beating up people who work for Sonia or vice versa. As some fight, Richie and Stanley are ripping up newspapers, stomping on them, even lighting them ablaze. Richie sees Eddie across the street with a cameraman.

"Eds! Over here!"

All of the newsies gather around for a photo, and SNAP! The camera goes. As soon as they stop the photos, they all go back to destroying newspapers, including Eddie. Richie seeing the gleam in Eddie's eyes is basically the best thing in the world. They stop as soon as they see policemen and Pennywise.

"Oh, crap! Boys! Run!" Richie yells out.

As soon as he says that, everyone scurries away, but Patrick and Henry grab Will.

“Please! Let me go! Someone help!” Will cries out.

“Shut it, crip!” Henry says, pushing Will to the ground.

Pennywise walks up to Will, grabbing the limping boy’s crutch. He starts beating Will repeatedly, feeling no mercy. Will is scared, scared more than he’s ever been.

“It’s off to the Refuge for you, little man!” Pennywise says, putting handcuffs on Will’s wrist. “Take him away!”

The policemen drag Will away.

“Richie!” Will screams.

“Will!” Richie yells back.

“Tozier!” Pennywise bellows.

Richie books it for his rooftop. As soon as he has caught his breath,

he thinks.

'What the hell was I thinking? I got everyone hurt. At least Pulitzer will have an exciting headline. Pennywise got Will.'

Then he thinks of Santa Fe. He could take up the offer of Beverly's money when he finishes the new backdrop. It could be enough to start a whole new life. But Richie doesn't want to keep the other newsies in danger. Yeah, they're all mature for their age, but most of them don't know how to keep a strike going, not without Bill's help. Then his mind switches to Eddie. The boy who rebuffed his offer of having a newspaper, then asked to be part of the strike. He realizes that… he loves Eddie. And that saying is "if you love something, you let it go", right? He has to do that for Eddie. Eddie's better off.

The next morning, the other newsies are at the bar. The day before, most of them were beaten up a little, so they're a little weak.

"Ugh…" Stanley groans as he rubs his ribs.

"You said it, Stan," Mike agrees.

"Good morning, gentlemen," Eddie walks in with a newspaper in hand. "Aw, get a look at these glum mugs," He says with sympathy, "Are these really the boys that made the front page of the New York Sun?" He holds up the newspaper, with a big smile on his face.

“What?!” Dustin exclaims. They all run to Eddie, making grabby hands at the newspaper.

“Lookit, that’s me!” Stan says, looking at his photo.

“Where’s me?” Ben asks, taking the newspaper.

“Y-y-you got us i-in the p-p-p-pape?” Bill asks Eddie.

“You got yourself in the pape,” Eddie replies.

“‘Newsies stop the World’. Damn, that’s a headline even Dustin could sell!” Lucas says.

“What else ya got?” Mike asks Eddie.

“My story’s the only one that ran. Pulitzer has declared a blackout on strike news, so even I’m shut down now,” Eddie says. “Hey, I heard they got Will, did they get Richie, too?” Eddie asks. He hasn’t seen Richie since the protest yesterday and he was worried.

“Henry and Patrick is sayin’ that he split as soon as he saw Pennywise and the cops,” Mike replies.

“Richie don’t run from no fight!” Georgie yells.

“For Richie’s sake, let’s just drink in the moment. I’m famous!” Stan exclaims, a huge smile spread across from ear to ear.

“And what of it?” Dustin dumbly asks.

“Ya stupid or what? When you’re famous, the world is your erster,” Stan gloats.

“Ya what?” Ben asks.

“Your erster,” Stanley says again, gaining confused looks, “Your erster. Ya know, your fancy little clam with the pearl inside!” Everyone laughs at Stan.

“But how much does being famous pay?” Ben asks.

“Ya don’t need money when you’re famous! They gives ya whatever ya want gratis!” Stanley replied.

“Such as?”

“Anything! Brand new shoes, food, proper shelter!” Stanley lists off, making Eddie laugh.

At Bev's theater, Richie is painting the backdrop for her and Bev comes backstage, her red locks cascading down her back and wearing a robe, holding an envelope in her hand.

"Here's everything I owe you for the first backdrop…" She trails off, "And a little somethin' extra just because I'm gonna miss you."

"Miss Bev-" Richie tries to protest.

"Richie," Bev interrupts, giving Richie the envelope.

"Thanks. For everything," Richie says, giving a slight smile to Beverly.

"You are most welcome. Just tell me you're going somewhere and not running away," Bev had been friends with Richie since he started working for the World two years ago and was always trying to steer him in the right way.

"Does it matter, Bev?" Richie deadpans, his smile disappearing.

"When you go somewhere, and it turns out to be the wrong place, you can always go somewhere else. But if you're running away,

nowhere's ever the right place," Bev says, giving Richie a sad hug.

"H-how about l-l-lettin' your fr-fr-friend know y-you're alive?" Richie groans, hearing Bill at the back entrance.

"I'll give you a moment alone," Bev says, leaving the theater.

"Where'd y-you go? W-we c-c-couldn't find ya," Bill says.

"What if I didn't wanna be found?" Richie replies, going back to painting the backdrop.

"Is th-that a r-r-real place? Santa Fe?" Bill asks, referring to the backdrop, "Oh! I a-almost forgot! W-w-we made the front p-page!" Bill says, holding out the newspaper.

"Good for you, Billy," Richie says, not moving away from his work.

"Everyone wants to m-meet you, R-Rich. Even Max Mayfield s-s-sent a k-kid to s-s-say that the next e-e-event, you c-c-can count o-on Brooklyn," Bill chuckles, but Richie stands up to submerge his paintbrush in the water cup.

"We became steppin' stones," Richie replies, wiping the paintbrush dry.

“Yes, b-b-but we t-took r-r-round one! Th-that somet-times happens!”

“Every newsie I saw on the street was sellin’ papes like the strike never happened,” Richie argues.

“L-listen, if I-I don’t sell p-p-papes, my family d-doesn’t eat,” Bill says. Even if they’re doing the strike, he still needs to feed his family.

“Save your voice, I get it. It’s hopeless.”

“See? I told ya Richie would be here!” Georgie says, making Bill and Richie turn around to see Eddie with Georgie.

“Oh, my God, what does it take to get away from you?” Richie rolls his eyes.

“There i-is-isn’t an e-escape from us, Rich,” Bill half-jokingly says, “Did y-you see the l-look on R-Rogan’s face? He l-looked scared. We got p-p-p-people worried, R-Richie.”

“So, can we have the theater?” Georgie asks Bill.

“C-calm down, I d-d-didn’t get that f-far.”

“I heard you wrote some story, Eds,” Richie says.

“You look like hell,” Eddie disregarded the previous statement. “What’s that place?” Eddie asks about the backdrop.

“S-S-Santa Fe,” Bill replies, not giving Richie a chance to reply.

“Ugh, Richie, this ‘go west’ thing is getting old. Even Horace Greeley moved back to New York,” Eddie says.

“Yes, he did. And then he died,” Georgie comments.

“Rich, Pulitzer had me blacklisted from every news desk in New York. All because of the article,” Eddie says, Richie gives him a worried look.

“Can we get back to business? Can we have the theater or not?” Georgie asks again.

“I-I’ve been tr-trying to t-t-tell you. We wanna h-hold a rally. A citywide meeting where every n-newsie gets a say. And we d-d-d-do it af-after hours s-s-so no one loses a d-day’s pay. S-smart, huh?” Bill explains, his stutter worsening slightly.

“Smart enough to get into an institution!” Richie argues.

“Says the guy who wants to go somewhere that he’s never been to

before," Eddie says.

"Wanna see a place I seen? How 'bout this?" Richie says, turning the backdrop around.

On the canvas was a political cartoon of a high heel, probably signifying Sonia, stepping on newsies.

"Newsie Square thanks to me. Kids hurt, others arrested-"

"Hey, l-lighten up. N-no one d-d-died," Bill interrupts.

"Oh, is that so? Call me a quitter, call me a coward, but there is no way I'm puttin' them kids back in danger," Richie yells at Bill.

"We're d-d-doing something th-that hasn't b-be-been done be-before. H-h-how can th-that n-not be d-d-dan-dangerous?" Bill asks.

"Mike brought me a letter from Will at the Refuge. In it, he mentioned that he hasn't been fed. I went to see it for myself, and he couldn't even come to the window! He probably won't make it, Bill. Are you gonna risk that to get better pay?" Richie finishes his rant.

"T-tell me h-h-how qu-qu-quitting does Will any g-good," Bill says, but Richie stays silent. "Exactly. So… we keep d-doing the s-s-strike b-b-because we w-will win. We're al-already winning." Richie scoffs at that.

“Bill, what the hell? As I recall, we all got our asses kicked. Sonia won!” Richie yells.

“W-won round one!” Bill argues. “What d-do you th-think of S-Sonia?”

“She’s a snake, that’s what I think of her,” Richie replies.

“Y-y-you know, she’s s-s-s-scared,” Bill discloses, and Richie rolls his eyes, “No, I-I’m serious! Why d-do you th-think she s-sent P-Pennywwise and th-the c-c-cops?”

Richie really thinks about this. Sonia isn’t one to directly fight against people, probably not to start some kind of scandal, so she sends backup.

“She knows we’re winning,” Richie gave in.

“We’re doing something no one’s tried,” Eddie says, placing his hands on Georgie’s shoulders. “And are we scared? Yes.”

“We just have to stay on track,” Richie gives Eddie a smile. God, he loved him.

“We have faith,” Eddie says, returning Richie’s smile.

“W-w-we’ve got the plan,” Bill adds.

“And we’ve got Richie!” Georgie finishes.

“We’re back!” Richie says, spitting in his palm.

Bill, Georgie and Eddie copy Richie, spitting in their palms as well and shaking his hand.

“Just watch what happens, Sonia!” Eddie yells.

That afternoon, Sonia has called the Mayor, Neil and Pennywise into her office and Eddie is sitting patiently in a chair.

“... but, Miss Pulitzer, I’ve read your editorials. How can you have sympathy for the trolley workers, but not for the newsies,” the Mayor says, nursing the glass of whiskey Sonia had poured for him.

“Because the trolley workers were striking for a fair contract. The newsies are striking against me!” Sonia shrieks, gaining a scared look from Eddie.

“I’m sorry, but you cannot order a raid without a cause,” the Mayor replies.

“What if I told you that the leader of this strike was an escaped convict?” Sonia smirks.

“Escaped convict?” the Mayor says.

“Escaped from one of your own institutions. Mr. Gray, which one is it?” She asks to Pennywise.

“That one there,” Pennywise points to Richie’s photo, “Richie Tozier.”

“How do you know this boy, Mr. Gray?” the Mayor asks.

“He was sentenced to my Refuge for loitering and vagrancy, but his disregard for authority made him a frequent visitor,” Pennywise explains. “Also, he was caught stealing food and clothes. That got him into the Refuge for six months, but then he escaped for good. Until now.”

“You’d be doing a huge service by getting this boy off the streets, Mr. Mayor,” Sonia remarks. The Mayor sighs.

“I guess we can bring him in quietly and-”

“What good of taking him quietly will do me? I want a public example to be made!” Sonia yells again. Scott runs in.

“Miss Pulitzer! The boy, Richie Tozier, he’s here!” Scott exclaims and Eddie springs to his feet, with a concerned look on his face. “He’s asked to see you.”

“Bring him in, Scott,” Sonia says, Scott leaving her office. “Mr. Gray, if you may.” Pennywise hides in the closet. “Sit,” Sonia orders Eddie. Eddie follows this order, sitting and slumping in his seat. Sonia turns the chair around so the younger boy is out of sight. Scott comes back in.

“Mr. Richie Tozier,” Scott says, and Richie marches inside the office.

“Afternoon, lady and gents,” Richie says, enthusiasm in his voice.

“Richie Tozier. Is this the union leader or the thief and escaped convict?” Sonia asks.

“Whatever you want it to be, sweetheart,” Richie replies.

“Impudence is in bad taste when crawling for mercy, Mr. Tozier,” Sonia says.

“Crawlin’? I’ll laugh at that. I just dropped by with an invitation. Seems that a few hundred of your employees are rallyin’ to discuss

some recent events," Richie says, trying to use the most fanciest of words he knows, "Thought it was only fair to invite youse to state your case straight to the fellas. Whaddya say, Sonia?"

"You're just as disrespectful as I heard. Do you know what I was doing at your age, boy? I was a nurse in a warzone," Sonia says.

She has been by her father's side since she was very young, even becoming a certified nurse and helped fellow soldiers. Sonia was taught by her father that it's every man for himself after that.

"Yeah, and how'd that turn out for ya?" Richie snickers.

"War taught me a lesson that shaped my life forever. You don't win a war on a battlefield, it's the headline that crowns the victor," Sonia seriously says.

"I'll keep that in mind when New York wakes up to front page photos of our rally."

"Rall until the cows come home, not a paper in town will report it. If it's not in the paper, it never happened," Sonia informs Richie.

"You may run the city, but there are some of us that don't wanna be bullied. Even some reporters…" Richie trails off.

"Like that young man who wrote that article. He's very talented. And

handsome, don't you think?" Sonia's voice becomes slightly sweet.

"I'll tell him you said so," Richie says.

"Oh, he can hear for himself. Can't you, Eddie-bear?" Sonia says, Eddie standing up and facing Richie. "I see you know my son, Edward."

Richie's eyes widen, he couldn't believe that Eddie was related to a Pulitzer, Sonia Pulitzer for that matter. Eddie had told him his last name was Kaspbrak. So was he who he said he was or does he have his mother's last name?

"Yes. My son." Sonia looks at Eddie, who has been listening to everything. "You may be wondering why the pen name and why my son doesn't work for me? All very good questions. I offered to give Eddie a life of wealth and leisure, but he wanted to pursue a career. He was doing well until this recent lapse," Sonia explains, "But you're done with all that, aren't you, Eddie-bear?"

"Richie, I-"

"Don't trouble the poor boy, dear. Mr. Tozier has a full plate of his own. Wouldn't you say so, Mr. Gray?" Pennywise comes out from the closet.

"Hello, Richie," Pennywise says. Richie tries to leave, but what stops him is Henry and Patrick. He's… trapped.

“Anyone feel a noose tightening?” Sonia chuckles, “Listen, I’ll make a deal with you. If you attend the rally and speak against the strike, you’ll see your criminal record expunged and your pockets filled with enough cash to carry you, in a first class compartment from New York to New Mexico and beyond.”

Richie stills at that. He’s been wanting to leave for years. Now’s his chance. But what about the others?

“You did mention that he wanted to go west, right, Edward?” Eddie nods.

“Eddie-”

“If you don’t follow my actions, you will suffer the consequences.” Sonia says firmly. “I’ll have all those friends arrested and put into the Refuge. You may have a tough guy exterior, but it’s not right to keep that crippled kid there. And how about Bill? And his little brother? Ripped from their family and tossed with the rats.”

Richie wanted to kill her at that point. He was still sensitive about what happened to Will, but to threaten that Bill and Georgie would be taken away from their parents? Richie could not let that happen, he couldn’t whatsoever.

“Henry, Patrick, bring Mr. Tozier down to the basement. Give him awhile to… mull it over,” Sonia devilishly smiles.

“Mother, no!” Eddie protests, thinking that he could make it stop, but it didn’t.

Henry and Patrick lead Richie to the basement, pushing him and making foul comments at him.

“Here ya go, Tozier. You’d better behave,” Patrick taunts.

“Yeah, but just in case, I’m polishin’ my favorite brass knuckles,” Henry adds.

“You can rest up on this old printin’ press,” Patrick says, hitting the top of the printing press. “That there is firm!”

Patrick and Henry exit the basement, leaving Richie in the dark place.

Richie doesn’t know what to do. On one hand, he wants to give the other newsies a right to speak up, but on the other, he doesn’t want anyone else hurt or arrested or taken away from whatever family they’ve got.

He has to do it.

That evening, the rally is being held at the theater. Every newsie of New York is there, Manhattan, Flushing, Richmond, Woodside, the Bronx.

And as if on cue from a mention, Brooklyn's there. Marching in as if they own the place.

"Heard ya needed help," The redhead says, "That's what we're here for."

"M-Max," Bill breathes. He didn't think Max and the other Brooklyn newsies would come, but here they were, right in front of him.

"Welcome, newsies of New York City!" Bev exclaims, "Welcome to your revolution!" The crowd cheers.

"A-and l-let's hear i-it for M-Max Mayf-field and Brooklyn!" Bill gives the stage to Max.

"Newsies united! Let's see what Pulitzer has to say now," Max smirks.

"Hey, Billy, where's Richie?" Mike asks. This starts a chant of Richie's name.

"B-Bev, have y-y-you seen Richie?"

“Sorry, kid. Looks like you’re going solo,” Bev gives him a sympathetic smile. Bill takes center stage.

“Newsies of New York! Look at all the work we’ve done! We got newsies from every newspaper and neighborhood here tonight!” The crowd cheers again, “Tonight, we declare that we are as much a part of the newspaper as any reporter or editor.”

The cheering becomes louder as Bill goes on.

“From this moment on, we are not to be treated like kids! They will treat us as equals!” Bill finishes.

“Whoa. He didn’t even stutter,” Dustin murmurs.

“Wanna be talked to like an adult? Start actin’ like one!” Everyone turns around to see Richie walking into the theater. The cheers are so loud, Richie think he’s gone deaf.

“Richie!” Bill exclaims. Richie takes center stage, and quiets all the newsies.

“Alright. Pulitzer hiked up the price of papes without a word to us, and we got pissed about it,” Richie says. “So we went on strike.”

The crowd cheers, even getting louder than before.

“But then what? Pulitzer will lower the price? But, fellas, we gotta be realistic here. Even if she does lower the price, she might raise it again in a couple weeks,” Richie sighs. “I spoke to Miss Pulitzer. She said that if we disband the union, she will never raise the price.”

This gives Richie a chorus of boos, an he was getting overwhelmed. He starts to back away when he bumps into Neil.

“Part of that deal,” Neil says, taking out the money and handing it to Richie. “Keep up your end of it.”

Neil walks out of the theater, and Richie pockets the money. This causes people to think Richie betrayed them. All of the newsies run out, thinking that Pennywise will find them.

Eddie is on Richie’s rooftop. He couldn’t believe what his mother tried to do. He was ashamed to be related to her, disgusted even. Yes, he loved her, but if he was able to be born into another family, he’d take it in a heartbeat. He’s looking at drawings he found with Richie’s belongings when he hears creaking from the ladder.

“Pulitzer junior,” Richie says coldly.

“Richie,” Eddie breathily says.

“How’d you get up here?”

“Mike showed me,” Eddie replies and Richie notices that Eddie is holding his drawings.

“Did he say you can go through my stuff?” Richie says, annoyance in his voice.

“I’m sorry, it was just sitting with your stuff and-” Richie takes the drawings from Eddie. “Is that really what it’s like in the Refuge? Those drawings… three kids to a bed, rats everywhere and vermin?”

Eddie had heard of the Refuge before. But he’d thought that at least Pennywise would keep it acceptable to the health of little boys and girls.

“What? Is it different than where you were raised?”

“Pennywise said that you were arrested for stealing food and clothing. You stole to help those kids,” It clicks for him. “I don’t understand. If you were willing to go to jail for those kids, how could you turn your back on them now?”

“Says the guy who was a spy to your mother. Your MOTHER!” Richie yells at the top of his lungs.

“I was not a spy to her, I never lied to you.”

“Other than the fact that you’re related to Sonia Pulitzer! And is your real name even Kaspbrak?”

“Okay, Kaspbrak was my father’s name. But when he died, my mother changed our names to her maiden name. When I started working for the Sun, I started using it again,” Eddie explains. His father had been dead for years and it was still a sensitive subject for Sonia.

“I don’t give a damn about your life story, Eddie,” Richie huffs.

“God, if I wasn’t a pacifist, I could punch you square in the face!”

“Yeah?” Richie challenges, taking Eddie’s wrist and putting his fist underneath Richie’s chin, “C’mon, gimme your best shot!” Eddie’s were blown wide as saucers and he was breathing heavily.

Then Eddie cups Richie’s face and smashes his lips onto his. Richie’s eyes go wide, but he relaxes into the kiss. He feels like it was meant to be, him an Eddie. They part from the kiss.

“I, uh… I came to know you didn’t cave for the money,” Eddie admits.

“Your mother is right. No matter how much we strike, she ain’t lettin’ up. I don’t know what else to do, Eds,”

“I have an idea,” Eddie smirks.

“Eds-”

“Listen to me, Rich, even if you’re the leader, you might not have all the answers,” Eddie says, taking out a piece of paper, “Read it.”

Richie takes the paper and starts speed-reading it.

“‘The Children’s Crusade‘?”

“‘For the sake of every child in every sweatshop, factory and slaughterhouse, I ask of you to join us’. Richie, you didn’t do this strike just for the newsies, you did it for every other kid in New York. You demanded a place at the dinner table.”

“Really?” Richie was calm on the outside, but he was so giddy, he was worried he’d explode.

“If we publish this - my words with one of your drawings - and if any worker under the age of 21 read it and stayed home from work or came to Newsie Square, it could be a city-wide strike, Richie! Even my mother wouldn’t ignore that!” Eddie has a huge smile plastered on his face.

“But there’s one problem, we don’t have anywhere to print it,” Richie just had to kill the mood didn’t he?

“There’s gotta be one printing press my mother doesn’t control.” Eddie sighs. And Richie realizes.

The basement’s printing press.

“Oh, no,” Richie feels defeated.

“What? What is it?” Eddie asks.

“I know of a printin’ press I know no one would expect us to use” Richie replies.

“Well, what’re we waiting for? Let’s go!” Eddie says, but Richie grabs his arm, stopping him from leaving.

“Wait, what’s this for you? And I don’t mean ‘The Children’s Crusade’.” Richie asks. “What are we?”

“It can be anything you want, Richie,” Eddie replies, not really knowing what to say.

“No, that’s not the answer I want. I’m scared of what will happen.”

“Richie Tozier, you snuck up on me,” Eddie smiles.

“Yeah?” Eddie nods.

“All my life, I thought I knew what love was. My mother always taught me that love was only for family, not anyone else. But when I met you, you showed me that she was so wrong,” Eddie takes Richie’s hand in his, their fingers intertwining.

“You were just some stranger. Just someone passin’ by. Who knew we’d be here?”

Richie takes his free hand and puts it to Eddie’s cheek. Eddie’s eyes look like they can go on forever. Richie kisses Eddie again, for a little longer than last time, but Richie cuts it short.

“If only things were different,” Richie says, catching his breath.

“If you weren’t going to Santa Fe.”

“If you weren’t the heir to a newspaper. And if your mother weren’t after my head!” Richie laughs.

“You’re not really scared of my mother, are you?” Eddie teases.

“No, but… maybe I’m a little afraid of you,” Richie answers truthfully.

“Oh, don’t be!” Eddie says, kissing Richie one last time. “So… are we getting to that printing press?”

“Let’s do this thing, Eds.”

Later that night, Richie, Eddie, Bill, Georgie and Stanley sneak into the basement, along with an older man, about in his late twenties and a woman about the same age.

“C’mon. Get the windows locked,” Eddie quietly says.

“How can your mother not hear us right now?” Richie asks.

“My mother is a very heavy sleeper, so she won’t even hear us,” Eddie smiles.

“We got enough people to cover us?” Richie asks to Bill.

“I th-think so, a-and I h-hope s-s-so,” Bill says, his stutter back again.

“Me, too,” Richie replies.

“Hey, I-I’m gl-glad you’re w-w-with us again.”

“Shaddup,” Richie says, translating it to his own sincere apology.

“Just think, boys, whilst my mother snores blissfully in her bed, we’ll be using her own printing press to take her down,” Eddie is so happy. In the few days that Richie’s known him, he hasn’t seen anyone so happy in a while.

“This is what they print the papes on?” Stan asks, in awe at the printing press.

“I see why they threw this thing down here, but she’s in pretty good shape,” The older man says.

“Richie, this is Steve Harrington, he knows everything about the printings,” Eddie says.

“A pleasure,” Steve says and starts examining the press.

“And this is Barbara Holland, she’ll be typesetting article for us,” Eddie brings the short-haired woman over.

“Please, call me Barb. I’m glad to part of your revolution!” Barb exclaims, taking off her coat.

“Okay, can we get a move on and get down to business?” Georgie asks.

“A little grease and she’ll be good as gold,” Steve says, referring to the printing press.

“Here’s h-how it’ll w-w-work. A-as we p-print the p-p-papes, S-Stan, you l-let the f-f-f-fellas in and they’ll s-spread them to ev-every w-working k-k-kid in New Y-York,” Bill explains. “And a-a-after th-that…” Bill looks at Richie.

“After that, it’s up to them,” Richie finishes, and Stan leaves to let the other newsies in.

“Here they come!” Stan yells out, the newsies coming down the stairs and helping Steve and Barb make the papers.

This was the story they needed. They’ve been kept in the dark for too long. In the morning, they’ll be ready to fight a war. Finally, there’s change coming once and for all.

“In the words of union leader Richie Tozier,” Eddie says, reading off the one page newspaper, “‘We will work with you. We will even work for you, but we will be paid and treated as valuable members of your organization.’ Riveting stuff, Rich.”

“Get goin’. You have an important guy to see,” Richie says.

“Keep your fingers crossed,” Eddie was positive this would work, but it’s still good to hope that luck was on their side.

“For us, too, Eds,” Richie replies and Eddie leaves the basement.

Steve, Barb and the other newsies start to make multiple copies of the paper, stacking them into bundles and tying them with twine string. All of the newsies post them up along the streets of New York. Finally, there’s change coming once and for all.

The phones were ringing for hours. Sonia was getting a headache. Scott and Neil were answering them with ‘Miss Pulitzer will call you back’ or ‘She can’t talk’

“Silence those phones now!” Sonia yells and both men take the receivers off the cradles.

“The whole city is down, no one is at work. And everyone is blaming you, Miss Pulitzer,” Neil exclaims.

“They’re all calling the Mayor, the manufacturers, with such language,” Scott sighs. The door opens and slams closed revealing Richie, Max and Bill.

“How we doin’ this mornin’?” Richie says, slamming a copy of the newspaper they made the night before onto her desk.

“You’re behind this? We had a deal,” Sonia says.

“And it came with a money-back guarantee,” Richie tosses the bribe money onto the desk as well, “Thanks for the life lessons, Sonia. They’ll come in handy.” Neil takes the newspaper and starts reading it.

“They actually printed this nicely, very convincing,” Neil says, handing the paper to Sonia and her reading it.

“Without a doubt, this was written by my son.”

“Better sign him on before someone else does,” Richie says, annoying Sonia more.

“I thought I called a ban on strike material,” Sonia says back.

“We’re your loyal employees, we’d never take our business

elsewhere," Richie replies.

"There's the old printing press in the basement," Neil says to Sonia, and Sonia's eyes go wide, looking bigger with her glasses.

"I made you the offer of a lifetime, Tozier. Anyone who doesn't act in their own self-interest is a fool," Sonia says, standing up from her desk and walking toward Richie.

"What d-does that m-m-make of y-you? Th-this all h-ha-happened be-because you w-wanted to sell more p-papers. B-but y-your circulation is d-d-down by s-s-s-seventy percent," Bill speaks up. He makes a good point. "Why d-didn't you talk to us?"

"Because some people like Sonia here doesn't want anything to do with us. But a certain reporter told me that bein' boss doesn't mean you have all the answers. Just the smarts to snatch the right one when they hear it," Richie smiles at the thought of Eddie. He should be here soon.

Then they hear the newsies singing down in Newsie Square. They all look down the window, seeing them standing their ground.

"Have a look down there, Miss Pulitzer. As ya can tell, we got ya surrounded," Max says, looking at Sonia with a serious face.

"New York is closed for business, Pulitzer. Can't get a paper or a shoe shine. Can't send a message or ride an elevator or cross the Brooklyn

Bridge. You can't even leave your office. So what's next?" Richie smirks. Sonia is speechless.

"Miss Pulitzer! The Mayor is here, along with your son! And even the governor!" Sonia's secretary says. Eddie, Bev, the Mayor and Governor Teddy Roosevelt walk in.

"Governor Roosevelt?" Sonia says in disbelief.

"Sonia. What the hell have you done now?" Roosevelt shook his head in shame.

"I'll expla-"

"No need to. Thanks to Miss Beverly Marsh bringing your son to my office, I have a thorough grasp of what's going on," Roosevelt interrupts. "With illustrations to prove it," He holds out Richie's drawings. "This is the boy you spoke of, Edward?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hello, young man. I was told we shared a carriage ride," Roosevelt teases, Richie going red with embarrassment. "Well, Sonia, we can't let the kids do this anymore. How about we go down there and give them the good news?"

"News? What news?" Sonia was so confused.

“That you decided to bring the price back to where it was. Unless you want a full-fledged investigation?”

Sonia’s face says it all. She’s scared. She’s scared of what an investigation would do to her reputation. Her father’s reputation. And what would happen to her son?

“You wouldn’t dare!” Sonia exclaims.

“After you tried to keep me from office? I’d do it with a smile. I know you have a warm heart, Sonia,” Roosevelt says. Sonia huffs.

“May I have a moment alone with Mr. Tozier?” Sonia calmly asks.

Everyone leaves the room, and Eddie gives Richie a loving look.

“Listen, I cannot put the price back,” Sonia says, Richie rolling his eyes, “I’m sorry, but I just can’t.”

“No, no, I get it. You need the best reputation in this city. I may be young, but I ain’t stupid.

“I thank you for understanding,” This is the most sincere he’s heard of her.

“But I have something I want. A compromise on the price,” Richie states.

“What if I reduce the raise by half and I get the other newspapers to do the same. It’s a compromise we can all live with,” Sonia is really trying. She just wants the damn strike to end.

“But you eat our losses. Any pape we aren’t able to sell, you buy back at full price,” Richie is a real negotiator. “It’s a compromise we can all live with.” He mocks.

“You’re not as stupid as I thought.”

“Deal?” Richie spits in his hand and holds it out.

“That’s disgusting,” She says. She reluctantly spits in her hand and shakes Richie’s hand.

The deal was sealed.

The newsies are still singing when Richie, Eddie, Sonia, Roosevelt, Max, and Bev come out to the square. The sight of them quiet the newsies down.

“Newsies of New York City!” Richie yells out, “We won!”

The crowd roars with cheers.

“And I’d like to introduce my new buddy, Governor Roosevelt!” The crowd cheers more.

“Each generation must, at the height of its power, step aside and share with the young. You all have laid claim to our world and I believe that the future, in your hands, will be bright and prosperous,” Roosevelt had brought some of the kids to tears, “And your drawings, Mr. Tozier, have brought new matters to light.”

Police whistles are heard and everyone turning around, they see Will at the front gate.

“Will!” Richie yells happily.

“Hiya, fellas! Miss me?” Will says, getting hugs from the newsies. “And I brought ya somethin’ straight from the Refuge!”

Two policemen bring Pennywise in their hold.

“Richie, those drawings you made an eloquent argument that the Refuge would be shut down. We will make sure Mr. Gray’s abuses

will be fully investigated," Roosevelt promises. "Officers, take him away!"

The policemen take Pennywise out of Newsie Square.

"Thank you, Governor," Richie pats Roosevelt's shoulder. Sonia takes Richie's drawing and takes a look at it.

"I can't help but think that if your art convinced the Governor to shut down the Refuge, what do you think of doing a political cartoon?" Sonia asks.

"Nah. Not my thing. And with the strike settled, I should be hittin' the road," Richie declines.

"I d-d-don't get i-it. What's S-Santa Fe g-g-got that N-N-New York ain't? S-s-sandstorms?" Bill asks.

"Better yet, what's New York got that Santa Fe ain't?" Eddie speaks up.

"New York's got us. And we're family," Will says, giving Richie a smile.

"Papes for the newsies, line up!" Rogan yells, the newsies going to pay.

“Come with me, Governor, and show me that backseat everyone’s been telling me about,” Bev says, leading Roosevelt away.

“Hey, don’t just stand there, you’ve got a union to run! And didn’t someone offer you a really exciting job?” Eddie teases.

“Me work for your mother?” Richie asks with sarcasm.

“You already work for my mother,” Eddie points out, laughing slightly. “And you have one more ace up your sleeve.”

“What would that be?” Richie asks.

“Me. Wherever you go, I’m there, right by your side,” Eddie says, taking Richie’s hand.

“For sure?”

“For sure.”

Eddie takes Richie’s face and kisses him softly, hearing the cheers of his fellow newsies. When they part, the cheers become louder.

“So R-Rich, y-y-you in or you out?” Bill asks.

Richie approaches the newspaper counter, a quarter in his hand. He slams the coin down and takes his papers.

Richie knew that whatever he chose to do, he had Will, Bill, the other newsies, and most importantly, Eddie to support him. But right now, he had to carry the banner.

Author's Note:

> Thank you so much for reading! This has been in the works for a good while and I'm so happy that I'm done! I promise that maybe I'll do a broadway/ musical au every couple months, I just need to see what I can do.
>
> Love, Abbey Rickardsdottir